

**NOTES FROM THE  
MARICOPA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS  
GRAND AVENUE NORTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY  
AGENCY/ COMMUNITY FORUM**

**November 14, 2000 – 2:00 p.m.  
City of Surprise Council Chambers  
12425 West Bell Road, Room 100, Surprise, AZ**

**Attendance**

**Agency Representatives**

Stuart Brackney, City of El Mirage  
Chuck Eaton, ADOT  
Kristina Fields, City of Phoenix  
Randy Overmyer, RPTA  
Ellis Perl, City of Surprise  
David Reuter, City of Surprise  
Eugene Russell, Mayor of Youngtown  
Carol Scherbarth, MCDOT  
Joan Shafer, Mayor of Surprise  
Kathie Sholly, City of Glendale  
Brenda Zambelli, MCDOT

**Other Community Representatives**

Phil Garner, PORA Sun City West  
Gerald Unger, Sun City HOA

**Others**

Randy Altenhoff, The Western  
Brian Curtis, URS  
Angela Dye, A Dye Design  
Dave French, URS  
Roger Herzog, MAG  
Dan Marum, BRW  
Ethan Rauch, BRW  
Chris Voigt, MAG

**1. Introductions**

Chris Voigt called the meeting to order at 2:00 P.M. He introduced MAG staff and the project team.

**2. Consultation**

Brian Curtis, URS summarized comments from the public meeting held on September 27, 2000. He then asked for any comments on the meeting notes from the July 28, 2000 Agency/ Community Forum and the public involvement plan. The following comments were raised.

Ellis Perl, Surprise: The public should be included throughout the process. He and others would like to see a third public meeting near the end of the study, in addition to the one already held and the one midway through the process. Chris Voigt, MAG replied that MAG will look at the budget and see if a third meeting could be added.

Joan Shafer, Mayor of Surprise: How can we assure that this study doesn't gather dust like "12 others" before it? The project team replied that (1) the corridor study is intended to develop realistic, implementable solutions, and (2) it will be completed within 12 months, making it easier to maintain momentum behind recommended improvements.

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Chris Voigt observed that the purpose of the study is to identify feasible projects and establish priorities and get them included in the MAG Long Range Transportation Plan. Then it will be up to Mayor Shafer and others to help move these projects through the ADOT programming process.

Ellis Perl asked how to get projects in the ADOT five-year program. Chuck Eaton, ADOT described the process and noted that ADOT is now looking to program projects for 2006. Phil Garner asked if some short-term projects could be done sooner. ADOT's answer is maybe—there are some sources of funds for immediate, low-cost improvements. Examples are District Minor Money, Enhancement funds and some money dedicated to safety projects.

Mayor Shafer asked why ADOT left a gap between Loop 101 (with the segment of Grand to the southeast covered in the recent MIS), and Loop 303 (with the segment northwest to Morristown about to be widened to four lanes). Dave French gave some historical background, stating that the only major Grand Avenue improvements in the last 10 years were between the Agua Fria River and the Beardsley Canal, where a four-lane divided section was built.

Mayor Shafer turned the discussion to safety issues. People can drive into the new ditches along Grand. Several attendees agreed that safety improvements deserve the highest priority and that safety should come first in the list of issues. In reviewing public input, Angela Dye, A Dye Design noted that there were many comments on signage and pedestrian crossing issues.

Mayor Shafer: Trains prevent ambulances from crossing the tracks to get to and from the hospitals. Something must be done as soon as possible. It was acknowledged that this is a major problem without an easy solution. Mayor Shafer reiterated that a grade separation over the tracks is her city's most urgent need, as lives are at stake. Most Surprise residents live south of Grand and can't reach the hospital without crossing the railroad.

There is a big "ramp up" to the four railroad grade crossings in Sun City, which are raised above surface level. Either the railroad needs to be lowered or Grand needs to be raised. The study needs to address this issue.

### **3. Working Papers**

Chris Voigt said that all working papers would be posted on the MAG website.

Dan Marum, BRW reviewed the status of Working Papers 1 and 2, especially the latter, which deals with socioeconomic conditions. Alternatives will be modeled in December once all socioeconomic data is received and analyzed. Dave French, URS emphasized that our schedule requires all socioeconomic and traffic forecasts to be complete by the third week in December.

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Question: Are we considering traffic forecasts from the new Surprise General Plan and other general plans? Dan Marum replied that MAG carefully reviewed the latest community plans in developing their alternative (accelerated growth) socioeconomic forecasts for the North Valley Forum study. BRW is using these unofficial, updated forecasts in its analysis of future conditions.

Brian Curtis presented Working Paper 5: Issues, Goals and Policies. Ellis Perl said that it is important not to give the public the impression that safety is less than a paramount concern. He felt safety should be moved to the top of the list of issues. Mayor Shafer agreed and again mentioned the urgency of the railroad crossing issue in her community. It was recommended that the prioritization of issues be dropped since all are important and will be addressed during the study.

Ellis Perl suggested that we mention the current MCDOT study on Bell Road signal coordination. Mayor Shafer asked whether ADOT can address striping issues immediately. The intersection of Greenway and Grand is one location in particular. Ellis Perl has requested this of ADOT several times. Mayor Shafer said that Surprise is “tired of being a stepchild” and wants ADOT to respond to the city’s application for Enhancement funds. Ellis Perl: These issues have been mentioned before, but they need to be stressed repeatedly to make sure they’re not overlooked.

### **4. Discussion of Preliminary Infrastructure Concepts to Address Issues**

Dave French led a discussion of some preliminary investment project ideas for Grand Avenue between Loop 101 and Loop 303. Since no traffic forecasts are available yet, the project team doesn’t yet know how much traffic will have to be served in the future. These ideas are intended to stimulate discussion and show the range of options available.

Generalized concepts for the Grand Avenue Corridor include an improved arterial, a limited expressway and a fully access-controlled facility. Dave presented specific applications of the limited expressway concept on three marked-up aerial photos, covering the entire length of the corridor. Many constraints and technical issues preclude easy solutions to the traffic mobility and safety problems in the corridor. Retrofitting is tough, expensive and disruptive to traffic. Specific points include:

- In general, an underpass across the railroad has a smaller impact area than an overpass, due to the clearance requirements for any structure over the existing tracks. The tracks are already elevated above grade level, making this constraint even more severe.
- The need to keep the road, railroad and drainage ditch operating during construction creates further constraints.

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- If Grand goes under selected intersections, only four lanes can fit through each underpass.
- In the MAG Long Range Plan, Grand is envisioned as a full expressway with no signals. This may never happen, due to lack of funds and local support.
- The 111<sup>th</sup> Avenue intersection is the most likely to be left alone, largely because of Youngtown's business access and fire service concerns.
- Some kind of grade separation is wanted at the intersection of Grand Avenue and Bell Road, the two busiest streets in the area.
- Overall, the limited expressway concept is similar to Option 4, which ADOT adopted for Grand Avenue southeast of Loop 101. There would be a grade separation of Grand Avenue at some locations and a grade-separated railroad crossing at others.

Ellis Perl noted that the El Mirage Road connection to Grand from the north is currently under construction. It will hook up with Grand at the existing Thompson Ranch Road signalized intersection. Surprise doesn't want to extend El Mirage to Dysart; an elementary school is located near the point where the two roads would intersect. There was a comment that a connection of El Mirage with Olive Avenue would be very desirable. Mayor Shafer and others oppose removing the existing Dysart Road intersection with Grand; it is very heavily used.

Question: Would ADOT consider providing the design and materials for signing and striping improvements, if the cities provide the labor? Dave French replied that ADOT is always open to the idea of partnerships and cost sharing with other entities.

Question: Would there be a bottleneck at locations where Grand Avenue transitioned from six to four lanes. Dave French replied that vehicles would have to merge however elimination of signalized intersections will more than compensate for the loss of capacity due to narrowing of the roadway from six lanes.

Additional comments include: Sewer and water lines cross Grand at 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue

### **5. Agency and Other Community Representatives – Open Discussion**

Open discussion occurred throughout the meeting.

### **6. Call to the Public**

There were no comments from the public.

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### 7. Next Steps

URS will make copies of the aerial-based presentation boards showing the proposed investment ideas for agency and community representatives to be distributed by MAG and posted on MAG's website. Dave French asked attendees to return comments on the investment ideas by early December.

URS will proceed with additional working papers and developing traffic forecasts for the corridor.

The next agency forum is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, January 16, 2001 at the same time (2:00 PM) and location (Surprise City Council Chambers). Mayor Shafer will reserve the room. The second public meeting will be scheduled for early to mid February.

#### **NOTICE FORUM:**

**THE FORUM TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR 1-16-2001 HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL FEBRUARY 2001. AN AGENDA WILL BE DISTRIBUTED PRIOR TO THE FORUM. PLEASE CHECK THE MAG WEBSITE, [www.mag.maricopa.gov](http://www.mag.maricopa.gov), UNDER "News and Events" FOR UPDATES TO THE PROJECT.**